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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 000141

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#) [UG](#)

SUBJECT: ITURI UPDATE: OPERATIONS CONTINUE AGAINST MILITIAS

REF: A. 05 KINSHASA 2110

[B](#). 05 KINSHASA 2102

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Following a series of military operations against armed militias in Ituri District (reftels), MONUC and the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) launched Operation Ituri Encourager January 12 to eliminate remaining militia elements in the region. To date, the joint operations have resulted in a further dispersal of Patriotic Force for Resistance in Ituri (FRPI) cadres in the southern part of the District, the re-taking of several small towns from militia control, and the killing of over 60 militia members. MONUC military officials say that the taking of one of the last militia strongholds, Tchei, will be harder than expected. End Summary.

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FIGHTING TOUGHER THAN EXPECTED AGAINST FRPI  
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[1](#)2. (C) Following the completion of Operation Edifice near Boga in Ituri District, MONUC military officials gave FRPI militia leaders a January 11 deadline to surrender themselves and their weapons. While initial talks between MONUC, the FARDC and the FRPI were encouraging, negotiations ultimately fell through. On January 12, MONUC and the FARDC launched Operation Ituri Encourager to kill or capture those FRPI cadres unwilling to surrender.

[1](#)3. (C) According to a January 21 internal military report to the MONUC Force Commander, FRPI militia members were concentrated in large numbers approximately 70km south of Bunia near the towns of Peka, Sota, Sejabo, Tchei, Singa and Kodeja. MONUC officials reported that FRPI leaders Jacob Bahenga and Cobra Matata were in those areas and were likely surrounded. The MONUC report indicated that the initial numbers of FRPI militia were "underestimated" from previous reports, and that fighting against them has been "tough."

[1](#)4. (C) MONUC Eastern Military Division Chief of Staff Col. Roddy Winser told PolOff January 25 that Cobra Matata is believed to be in Tchei. Winser said MONUC and FARDC forces are currently conducting what they hope is a final offensive on the town. Winser cautioned, however, that Tchei will be "a harder nut to crack" than other militia locations. Winser said that the remaining militia cadres are the truly hard-core fighters and are firmly dug in to their positions. He said he expected the town to fall to the FARDC "in the next few days."

[1](#)5. (C) Sharif said the MONUC/FARDC forces captured the town of Aveba January 23, after securing the towns of Kodesza, Geti and Kabaga the day before. Sharif said approximately 20 FARDC soldiers have been wounded in Ituri Encourager to date, and one FARDC major was killed during the fighting. In addition, 60 FRPI militia were killed, and about 20 were wounded, in fighting around Tchei the weekend of January 21-22.

[1](#)6. (C) MONUC officials attribute the difficulty in eliminating the militias to two main factors: outside military assistance to the militias and poor performance by some FARDC troops. The Ituri Deputy Brigade Commander, Col. Ahmed Karmaouch, told PolOff January 11 that he believes weapons caches seized earlier from FRPI members came from foreign sources, mostly likely from Uganda. Karmaouch added that, at the end of December, the FRPI's supply lines had been cut and its cadres were running out of arms and ammunition. Karmaouch said the renewed intensity of the fighting by the FRPI indicates they have been resupplied. According to the MONUC report, rockets have been fired at FARDC and MONUC forces, and one attack helicopter was hit by bullets. MONUC's Head of Office in Bunia, Sharouh Sharif, told PolOff in a January 23 conversation that MONUC intelligence officials believe Ugandan sources are actively supplying arms to the FRPI and other militias in Ituri. In addition, the internal MONUC military report states that some forces from the ADF are also supporting the FRPI militia.

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FARDC PERFORMANCE: MIXED RESULTS  
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[1](#)7. (C) MONUC military officials have expressed concern about

the effectiveness of some FARDC troops operating in the area. The MONUC document reports that the 6th Integrated Brigade "has not been as effective as hoped" in its conduct during military operations. The report stated that the 6th

Integrated Brigade may ultimately be relieved of duty in the operation. The MONUC Ituri Brigade Operations Chief, Major Nizan, gave a similar assessment to PolOff January 11, explaining that FARDC troops lacked discipline, training and equipment to carry out operations effectively.

18. (C) By contrast, MONUC officials praised the conduct of the 1st Integrated Brigade. Winsor said the 1st Brigade has made "positive gains" in its fight against the FRPI, and that he has been impressed with their performance. Despite the intense fighting around Tchei, Winsor said the 1st Brigade has maintained its position and has had good coordination of fire during operations.

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UPDATE ON PETER KARIM  
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19. (C) Karmaouch and Sharif told PolOff that, following the conclusion of Ituri Encourager, subsequent military operations in Ituri will focus on the capture of Peter Karim and his Congolese Revolutionary Movement (MRC) militia. According to Karmaouch, Karim had been putting out feelers for a possible surrender to MONUC forces (reftel B). Karmaouch said, however, that the interlocutor who had been serving as a go-between for the two camps has disappeared, and it is presumed he was killed by MRC cadres.

110. (C) The MONUC internal report states that on January 12, Peter Karim had re-entered the DRC near Mahagi from Paidia in Uganda with 80 boxes of AK-47 ammunition. MONUC currently believes his location to be Livo, and that he is in the process of regrouping his forces to retaliate against the FARDC.  
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